

file Russia -
domestic
violence

SUMMARY

Here a woman's dignity does not have any value.

-Zoya Khotkina

Moscow Center for Gender Studies

Moscow, April 25, 1996

In March 1995, Human Rights Watch released *Neither Jobs Nor Justice*, a report documenting widespread employment discrimination on the basis of sex that was practiced, condoned, and tolerated by the Russian government. The report also described how Russian law enforcement agencies routinely denied women their right to equal protection of the law by failing to investigate and prosecute violence against women. In April 1996, we returned to Russia to further research this problem. This report examines in-depth the state response to sexual violence outside the home as well as to sexual and other violence by intimate partners inside the home.

Violence against women is a pervasive problem in Russia. According to government statistics, nearly 11,000 women reported rape or attempted rape in 1996; the government simply does not gather statistics on women assaulted or killed by their partners. Yekaterina Lakhova, President Yeltsin's advisor on women's issues, has estimated that 14,000 women in Russia are killed by husbands or family members each year. These statistics, however, by no means document the extent of the problem of gender-based violence. According to women's rights activists, only about 5 to 10 percent of rape victims report to the police, and the rate of reporting by domestic violence victims is even lower. While myriad factors contribute to a victim's decision to report or to remain silent, Human Rights Watch found that the inadequacy of the government's response to victims of violence plays a significant role in perpetuating the silence and underreporting.

The government of Russia fails to afford victims of violence the protection of the law required by the international human rights treaties to which Russia is a party. Although Russian law criminalizes acts that constitute sexual or domestic violence, Human Rights Watch found that Russian law enforcement does not effectively ensure that incidents of violence against women are actually investigated and prosecuted, and in fact has sometimes obstructed their investigation and prosecution. This discrepancy between the law as written and the law as applied demonstrates Russia's failure to fulfill its international human rights obligations. By tolerating violence against women, Russia has failed not only to ensure rights guaranteed to women in relevant international treaties but to enforce its own laws in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Our researchers visited Moscow, the capital of the Russian Federation, and St. Petersburg, the second largest city in the Russian Federation. We also visited Sergeyev Posad, formerly Zagorsk, a city near Moscow; Murmansk, a military port in the northwest of Russia; and Nizhni Tagil, an industrial city in the Ural mountains. We collected testimony from women who had experienced sexual or domestic violence. We spoke with activists who work with female victims of violence, police officers, prosecutors, and forensic doctors. Our researchers also met with several present and former members of the State Duma. Based on this research, Human Rights Watch found that rather than combatting violence against women, the Russian law enforcement system creates numerous and substantial obstacles toward that end. Human Rights Watch documented that from the moment that victims of violence first seek out the legal system until the close of their cases, these women consistently confront hostility, reluctance, and bias against their cases.

Our research revealed that police and prosecutors typically reject or discourage complaints, suggesting that female complainants either provoked or fabricated attacks and thus were not truly victims. In the limited instances when victims' complaints were accepted, this skepticism or hostility nonetheless persisted, manifesting in flawed investigations. The investigations entail seemingly irrelevant and unnecessarily invasive and broad inquiries into victims' reputations and sexual histories. Investigations also impose a number of other dubious requirements that appear to hold complainants of sexual or other violence to a higher degree of scrutiny than is the case for

complainants of other types of crimes. These requirements include extensive psychological interviews of victims and traumatizing face-to-face confrontations between victims and alleged offenders. In keeping with their general insensitivity or lack of concern for violence victims, law enforcement officials also routinely fail, during investigations, to protect complainants and their families from harassment by alleged offenders and their friends who aim to dissuade the victims from pursuing their cases.

Human Rights Watch also discovered serious failings in the government's collection of forensic evidence, evidence which is a practical requirement in the prosecution of sexual assault cases in Russia. In many instances, we found, police deny or unnecessarily delay giving women the official referrals necessary for examinations at government-run evidence centers. This unwarranted interference with prompt examinations is especially egregious because of the transient nature of forensic evidence and its critical importance, particularly in cases of sexual assault. Even when victims do undergo forensic examinations, we discovered that they still encounter substantial difficulty in securing meaningful evidence. Many of the forensic examinations are sorely inadequate, revealing a bias against women who are not virgins. Instead of collecting evidence to document the extent and severity of women's injuries and to identify offenders, many doctors focus exclusively on the hymen to determine whether and when it was broken.

Despite the flaws in the investigative process, Human Rights Watch found that all the municipalities that it researched boast perfect or near-perfect conviction rates for crimes of sexual violence. The apparent success in prosecuting such crimes is misleading, however. Upon closer examination these figures suggest a practice of closing all but the most foolproof of cases. The probable corollary to this practice is that cases that are not foolproof are abandoned.

Human Rights Watch also documented the particular difficulties faced by victims of domestic violence. Because law enforcement officials resist even recognizing that domestic violence is a crime, many police officers refuse to respond to women's calls for help. In the limited instance when the police do respond, they often will hold the batterer, if at all, for only a brief period of time and release him unattended; after the release, the battering usually resumes. Human Rights Watch found that the police's failure to respond is particularly egregious because, at this time, criminal sanctions are the only legal protection available to battered women in Russia: Russia has no civil protection regime that would allow women to secure state-enforced protection orders from batterers without pursuing criminal charges.

Human Rights Watch found that the severe shortage of battered women's shelters—there are only a handful in all of Russia—and of affordable housing further contributes to the physical and mental endangerment of domestic violence victims. The absence of alternative housing options means that women are substantially restricted in their ability to escape violent partners. In many cases, battered women, even those who have divorced their violent partners, and their children have no choice but to live in the same apartment with their batterers. Although Russian law appears to provide some housing remedies—such as eviction of violent household members or apartment division—for domestic violence victims, Human Rights Watch found that these remedies are available primarily in theory and rarely in practice.

As a result of significant pressure from Russian women's rights advocates and international publicity, the government of the Russian Federation has begun to acknowledge the gravity of the problem of violence against women and has indicated a desire to improve protections for women. In February 1996, the Yeltsin administration published a policy document or white paper on improving the position of women in the Russian Federation. Issued in response to the recommendations of the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing, this white paper called for the government to conduct an assessment of Russian legislation and to develop proposals for revisions necessary to guarantee women's rights. Stressing that violence should be prohibited in all spheres of life including workplace and home, the government pledged in the white paper to collect full and objective statistics relating to violence against women, to coordinate its efforts with nongovernmental women's crisis centers,

and to develop criminal and civil sanctions for violence against women. In June 1996, President Yeltsin issued Decree 932, "On the Development of a National Plan of Action to Improve the Position of Women and Raise their Role in Society Before the Year 2000." This decree seeks to facilitate implementation of resolutions made at the Beijing conference and orders a draft plan to be developed.

It remains to be seen, however, whether the situation of women encountering violence will actually improve. Based on current indications, the prospects appear doubtful. For example, the 1997 budget adopted by the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, allocates no money toward implementing the goals outlined in the 1996 white paper and decree. The new criminal, labor, and family law codes, all adopted in the past two years, moreover, do little to improve the protection of women's human rights, particularly in regard to violence. Even the most ambitious step by the government, the drafting of a family violence law by the State Duma, is seriously flawed. As many women's groups, which have encountered substantial difficulty in accessing and commenting on drafts of the law, point out, the proposed law threatens to mitigate criminal penalties for violence, endangers the existence of independent women's crisis centers, and fails to create a civil protection regime. If the past and the present are any indication of the future, it appears that the outlook for the lives of real women in Russia, rather than the ones envisioned by current political rhetoric, remains bleak.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Russian Government

- Ratify the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as required under its membership in the Council of Europe and take immediate steps to integrate its protections into Russian law.
- Denounce publicly domestic and sexual violence as crimes and make widely available information about how victims of such crimes can seek redress and identify services.
- Provide funds for nongovernmental and governmental shelters for victims of domestic violence and their dependent children and provide appropriate training for those who staff them. These funds should not carry restrictions on the basis of victim's marital status, family status as dependent or independent, nationality, language, or sex.
- Enforce housing code provisions to evict violent family members from public housing and provide assistance to battered women in dividing their apartments or in finding alternative housing.
- Work with federal and local legislators to repeal all legislative, judicial and administrative acts that stipulate *propiska* (official residence permit) requirements so that women and batterers are not restricted in their ability to locate new housing.
- Allow attorneys and advocates to accompany victims of sexual and domestic violence through the investigatory process, including during psychological interviews of victims.
- Develop appropriate standardized specific protocols for the collection and preservation of medical evidence for cases of sexual and domestic violence against women. Such protocols should be made available to the public, to health care providers, and to groups working on women's rights or women's health.
- Ensure that all government medical facilities are adequately supplied to conduct forensic examinations for physical and sexual violence cases.

Interior Ministry

- Require a training program on domestic violence and sexual assault for all existing and incoming police officers. Individuals or organizations with expertise in investigating and working with victims of such crimes should be commissioned by the government to develop a training program and to achieve its national implementation. The training program should present effective procedures for investigating sexual and domestic violence. These should include: procedures for efficient intake of all complaints of sexual and domestic violence; effective and respectful interviewing procedures for victims of domestic and sexual

violence; methods for gathering medical evidence; and methods for protecting victims and witnesses from harassment by defendants (including physical violence, threats and bribes to withdraw complaints).

- Gather and maintain accurate and comprehensive statistics detailing the nature and degree of sexual violence. These records should, at a minimum, set forth the number of complaints received, the number of complaints that are taken to court, and the conviction rates. The Ministry of Interior should implement a system for collecting information based on reports filed with the police and those collected by independent hotlines and make such information publicly available.
- Gather and maintain accurate and comprehensive statistics detailing the nature and degree of violence in the home, including altering current statistical categories to include domestic violence. The Ministry of Interior should implement a system for collecting information based on reports filed with the police and those collected by independent hotlines and make such information publicly available.
- Designate one police officer in each local station to coordinate all complaints of sexual and domestic violence. The officer should be responsible for ensuring that the intake process functions effectively, i.e., ensuring that desk officers accept complaints appropriately and give prompt referrals for medical examinations; monitoring the investigations; communicating with complainants; and investigating complainants' reports of harassment from defendants.
- Discipline police officers who refuse complaints of sexual or domestic violence without cause, close cases without cause, or accept bribes to close investigations.
- Take affirmative measures to protect complainants and witnesses from harassment by defendants and their families.
- Provide female victims of violence with information about the names and methods for contacting groups that assist victims. This information should be available in all languages commonly spoken in the station's region.

Legislators

- Amend the criminal procedure code to allow hospitals, clinics, or private doctors to be certified to conduct official forensic exams that will be admissible in sexual assault prosecutions. Require that all doctors in emergency rooms and injury clinics be trained in the collection of medical evidence for sexual assaults, and provide "rape kits"¹ to facilitate the collection of such evidence.
- Provide a civil remedy for domestic violence victims in the form of a legally enforceable protection order that is easily accessible and readily available. Courts should issue such orders to direct the alleged batterer to refrain from contacting, approaching, harassing, and assaulting the complainant. Violations of this order should be subject to criminal penalty. The police must enforce such orders diligently.
- Revise the criminal law to reinstate Article 118, which provided criminal sanction for forcing employees into sexual contact.
- Revise the criminal procedure code to institute protections for victims of sexual violence during psychological interviews and face-to-face confrontations with the accused offender in the course of police or prosecutorial investigations. Such protections may include provisions to allow women to have a therapist or nonlegal advocate present during the interviews and confrontations, and to train law enforcement officials in the symptoms and results of post-traumatic stress disorder so that they may be sensitive to any additional shock that women may be prone to as a result of the confrontations.
- Allocate funds for the provision of social services to victims of sexual and domestic violence.
- Ensure that crisis centers are not restricted in their ability to provide services for victims of sexual and domestic violence. Extensive scrutiny should be given to any proposed licensing scheme, examining

¹ Rape kits are designed to collect evidence of rape and sexual assault from the victim's body and contain items such as separate evidence bags for vaginal swabs, rectal swabs, pulled head hairs, saliva samples, pubic hair combings, outer clothing, foreign materials, and underwear.

whether requirements as to services provided and staffing prove essential to victims or instead create obstacles to the provision of services.

To the United States Government

- Ensure that the Law Enforcement Assistance Program, which conducts seminars for Russian law enforcement bodies, continues to focus on investigating and prosecuting sexual and domestic violence.
- Ensure that the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) legal education and reform projects include help in reforming the civil and criminal law to provide equal protection to victims of sexual and domestic violence.
- Amend Section 498A(a)(3) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which covers the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and requires the president to "take into account not only the relative need but also the extent to which that independent state is acting to" progress toward democracy, market reform, arms control, and protecting human rights, to mandate specific documentation of the extent that independent state is acting to protect women's human rights.
- Continue AID funding to nongovernmental and governmental crisis centers in Russia.

To the United Nations

- Draft a manual on the treatment of victims of crimes as directed in the Ninth U.N. Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders in Cairo, Egypt in 1995. This manual should specify particular measures that police, prosecutors, and courts should take to safeguard victims of sexual and domestic violence from retaliation by their assailants.

To the European Union

- Ensure that women's human rights are respected as a condition of the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.
- In accordance with the legally binding human rights conditionality clause in its Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the EU must raise concerns and seek solutions to the problems surrounding violence against women in Russia, both through its own relations with Russia as well as through other international fora, including the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the United Nations.

To the OSCE

- Act on the recommendations adopted at the October 1997 seminar on women's status and participation in society and insist that monitoring and reporting on women's rights are a priority in future OSCE work. To this end, establish a high-level coordinator, preferably based in Vienna, with a mandate to ensure that women's human rights are incorporated into all relevant OSCE operations.
- Call on each member state delegation to the OSCE to report to the Permanent Council and the Chairman-in-Office on efforts undertaken by its government to implement OSCE standards related to women's status. Require each OSCE field mission to report on its efforts to monitor the implementation of such standards, on its outreach to local women's organizations, and on the results of such activities. In Russia, OSCE monitoring of and support for women's rights should emphasize the need for legal protection for victims of sexual or domestic violence.
- Develop the role of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in promoting women's human rights by ensuring that ODIHR staff be trained in women's human rights and that at least one permanent staff member has expertise in women's human rights and a mandate to ensure that OSCE staff and field missions actively monitor and report on women's human rights.

To the Council of Europe

- The Parliamentary Assembly should direct the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee to appoint a rapporteur to study the problem of sexual and domestic violence in the Russian Federation and to develop recommended legal and policy measures to give women effective redress against such abuse.

- Monitor actively the problem of sexual and domestic violence and the response of law enforcement to such assaults in all member states, including the Russian Federation.

To the World Bank

- Require that the health sector reform projects in Russia that address women's reproductive health issues include components for identifying and treating sexual and domestic violence.
- Facilitate the development and use of rape kits to collect admissible evidence of sexual assault.

BACKGROUND

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation ("Russia") has emerged as the largest, richest, most populous, and most powerful successor state to the former superpower. In transitioning from one-party rule and a command economy to a multi-party political system and a market economy, however, Russia has undergone substantial economic and political turmoil. While the effects of this instability and dislocation have been experienced throughout Russian society, they have been particularly devastating for the lives of women in Russia. From the workplace and government to the streets and the home, Russian women are increasingly encountering discrimination, exclusion, and violence. Although Russian women's groups have begun organizing and demanding change, their voices unfortunately have largely fallen on deaf ears. In particular, the Russian government has failed to take measures to alleviate the severe situation, and in some cases has actually served to exacerbate it. In 1995, the Russian government pledged at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing to take measures to protect and ensure women's human rights. As serious efforts in furtherance of this commitment remain elusive, the grave problems faced by Russian women continue to persist and are likely to intensify.

Women and the Workplace

The Russian Federation's transition to a market economy has been marked by growing economic hardship and a collapse of government services. From 1991 to 1995, the real gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 34 percent.² It fell another 6 percent in 1996, 2 percent more than it had in 1995.³ The drop in GDP halted in August 1997, and according to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, "Russia objectively stands on the threshold of economic growth."⁴ While the government and some economists now predict an upturn in the economy, unemployment and its devastating effects continue to intensify. The unemployment rate, according to Goskomstat, the state committee on statistics, is hovering at around 10 percent; yet unemployment in Russia, a January 1997 report released by the International Labour Organisation suggests, is chronically understated.⁵

The impact of joblessness is felt disproportionately by women. Although women make up 53 percent of the population in the Russian Federation,⁶ out of Russia's 2.3 million officially unemployed more than 70 percent are

² Janet Guttman, "Russian Economic Problems Remain after IMF Handout," Reuters, February 9, 1997.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Maxim Filimonov, "Russian Economy Showed Growth Potential in August," Reuters, September 1, 1997.

⁵ Guy Standing, "Russian Unemployment and Enterprise Restructuring" (Geneva: International Labour Organisation, 1997).

⁶ Yelena Ershova, Yelena Kochkina and Marina Liborakina, "Komy gendernaya ekspertiza? (Who Needs Gender Analysis?)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 2, 1996, p. 6.

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domestic violence
Office of the Senior Coordinator
for International Women's Issues

**Joint US/Russia Family Violence Against Women Conference in Moscow
for the First Lady's Trip to Russia**

Background on the problem:

- Violence against women is one of the world's most pervasive human rights violations.
- In the United States, nearly one-third of all female homicide victims are murdered by their intimate partners and domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, totaling more than the number of automobile accidents, muggings and rapes combined. (Source: Department of Justice; USAID)
- Domestic Violence is a widespread problem in Russia. According to the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997*, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) estimated that in 1996, 80 percent of violent crimes occurred in the home.
- In Russia, domestic violence victims often confront hostility and skepticism. They experience difficulties when attempting to file complaints, during the investigatory process, and in securing prosecution of their cases. Police are unwilling to be involved in what they consider domestic disputes.
- In Russia, there is a general lack of understanding of this issue in the legal community and there is no legal definition of domestic violence. Some forms of battering are addressed in the new criminal code, but are too narrowly defined to apply in most cases. There are no civil remedies, such as protective orders, for battered women.
- There is lack of awareness about domestic violence and there is no national political will to seriously consider the issue. In fact, more than four dozen renditions of a national civil law to address domestic violence have failed to make any progress through the Duma.
- There are only 32 women's crisis centers in Russia, all founded after the transition to democracy. There are only a few shelters for battered women, including one in St. Petersburg and another in Langepas, Siberia. There are no shelters in Moscow. The lack of shelters combined with the lack of permanent housing options often forces women to continue to live with their batterers, even after a divorce.
- Human Rights Watch published a report on domestic violence in Russia, which was released in Russia this past March. There has been no public response from the Russian government to this report.

The Joint US/Russia Initiative

Background:

- Last year, after the human rights bilaterals with Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck, the Russian Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that the US and Russia jointly sponsor a conference on family violence against women
- The joint US-Russia conference on family violence against women is planned for late fall in Moscow. The key players are the State Department, the US Embassy in Moscow, and USAID. This is an important step in building a civil society in Russia.
- Theresa Loar, Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues, traveled to Russia in November 1997 and met with members of the Russian government, including President's Yeltsin's office, about this conference.
- During First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's visit to Russia last November, she joined Mrs. Yeltsin for a town meeting in Yekaterinburg, and indicated her support for this joint conference.
- This process has been a slow frustrating one because the government of Russia took a long time deciding who would be in charge and support the conference. *
- The US government has USAID and State Department assistance programs in Russia to address domestic violence with a multi-disciplinary approach that includes police, lawyers, judges, physicians, mental health workers, social workers, NGO activists, and crisis center personnel.
- At the Moscow conference, we plan to jointly work through US and Russian multi-disciplinary teams, to develop standards and protocols to be used by police, crisis centers, and health care personnel to effectively address this issue. At the same time, we aim to garner high level government support to combat this problem.

file Bureau

Points for Collins
NGO Conference

Following points are provided for Ambassador Collins to use with Russian interlocutors given the concerns they expressed over an NGO conference being convened at the same time as the Summit.

- We have taken seriously your concern about holding an NGO conference during the summit, and we want to be responsive.
- We agree to defer this idea for now, but we also think it has great merit for the future. Such a conference would be an opportunity to showcase the extensive society-to-society contacts and partnerships between our countries.
- These partnerships are producing real benefit already in areas such as: small business, health care, environment, rule of law and education.
- We should publicize these grassroots ties and demonstrate that the U.S.-Russian relationship is more than a government-to-government dialogue. People in both of our countries are working together to create a better future.
- Our presidents have spoken about a vision for the twenty-first century, and society-to-society partnerships should be part of that vision.
- To build on these ideas, we suggest that the two first ladies discuss convening an NGO conference within the next six months. If they agree, they might announce such a conference during one of their public events.
- They might also visit specific projects where they could point to the positive work between Russian and American NGO partners. This would be a visible and effective way to highlight the practical benefits from our relationship.
- Mrs. Clinton is also thinking of participating in a roundtable discussion with a small group of NGOs. We are working on the details. Mrs. Clinton would welcome Mrs. Yeltsin joining her at such a roundtable, but we hope you would not mind Mrs. Clinton proceeding alone if Mrs. Yeltsin is not available.
- Is this approach acceptable?

File Russia

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 21, 1998

Mrs. Naina Iosifina Yeltsina
Moscow

Dear Naina,

I would like to suggest that we convene a conference during the upcoming Presidential Summit to highlight the vibrant partnership between Russian and American non-governmental organizations. I know that the work these organizations are doing to improve people's lives in both our countries is powerful and needed, and is an issue about which we both care deeply.

Convening this conference during the Presidential Summit would allow us to highlight the real and practical benefits of the work of non-governmental organizations in our countries, and how these groups have strengthened ties between the people of the United States and Russia. In my previous trips to Russia, I saw firsthand how important these organizations have become. Such a conference might make a real contribution to the Summit by underscoring that the relationship between our two countries transcends government to government contacts and is founded on a solid partnership between Russian and American societies.

The conference -- which we could call "Making a Difference Together" -- would recognize the significant achievements of Russia's non-governmental organizations and their partnerships with U.S. organizations. Illustrating the important role civil society plays in fostering democracy, supporting social change and promoting economic growth are important themes we would like to highlight during the Summit. The one-day conference could include 100-200 representatives of Russian non-governmental organizations and American non-governmental organizations active in Russia, as well as relevant representatives of the U.S. and Russian governments. The gathering could feature presentations in areas such as small business development and the creation of jobs; education and youth; health and social services; and environmental activism.

The exact role you and I would play in the conference could range from a simple welcome to something more substantive based on our personal interests. I look forward to discussing this with you and to seeing you in September.

With warm regards, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Hillary

Hillary Rodham Clinton

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D R A F T

Concept paper for an NGO Conference in Moscow
September 1 or 2, 1998

Russia has come a long way in developing a vibrant civil society with strong NGOs seeking to shape the future direction of the country and to provide essential social services to the population. In the midst of economic and political uncertainty, Russia's NGO sector continues to grow and develop at a brisk pace. There are over 150,000 registered NGOs in Russia today. These NGOs continue to press for the rights and concerns of their constituents at all levels of government, while becoming increasingly sophisticated in organizational management, fundraising and networking.

Recognizing these significant achievements, much more still needs to be done to strengthen the organizational capacity of and improve the external operating environment for Russia's NGO sector. Bringing press attention to the accomplishments made to date could greatly benefit the sector as a whole, encourage increased public participation and legitimize the work being done at the grassroots level. A conference would serve to recognize the achievements of Russian NGOs and illustrate the important role of civil society in fostering democracy and promoting economic growth. It would provide support to these nascent NGOs in the eyes of the government and the general population.

The proposed conference would focus on grassroots citizen activism and U.S.-Russian partnership. It would showcase some of the best models of grassroots activism in Russia and the strongest U.S.-Russian partnerships. NGOs would explain how these results were achieved in order to publicize their work, and help others get started or develop their activities further. It would also allow us to emphasize continued U.S. commitment to U.S.-Russian cooperation in this sector in the future.

The day-long conference would include up to 250 representatives of Russian NGOs and their American counterparts, as well as relevant representatives of the U.S. and Russian governments. USG-sponsored NGOs as well as those supported by foundations, private organizations and other sources would be included.

The conference would feature presentations in four or five thematic areas, possibly including:

- Small business development and job creation;
- Education and youth;
- Health and social services;
- Environmental activism.

Women play a vital role as the majority of leaders of Russian NGOs. The participation of women and contribution of women's groups would be incorporated into each theme and could serve as the basis for opening remarks by the FLOTUS.

The thematic sessions would be followed by a wrap-up session on partnerships, with presentations by U.S. and Russian partners. During this session, President Clinton could deliver remarks addressing the benefits to the U.S. and Russia of partnerships and grassroots connections between U.S. and Russian citizens and communities. His remarks could also stress the crucial role of individual participation in Russia's future development.

We would look for ways to include more NGOs across Russia and in the U.S. through TV coverage and use of satellite linkages, DVC and Internet linkages with sites in the U.S. and Russia. This publicity would broaden the audience for these issues beyond the NGO communities of each country so that others hear about the role that grassroots NGOs play in developing a civil society. The event could also include an NGO fair with booths and informational materials to further disseminate information about NGO activities.

USAID would take the lead in organizing this conference, working with USIA and other USG organizations, NGOs, and foundations here and in Russia.

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